IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of: Corral, Bradley R. et al.	Attorney Docket No. 082669045008
Application No.: 10/750,799	
Filed: January 2, 2004	
For: PRODUCTION LINE BANDING SYSTEM	
Examiner: Durand, Paul R.	
Art Unit: 3721	
Confirmation No.: 1828	

AMENDMENT TO SPECIFICATION

In paragraph 0001, please amend paragraph to read as follows:

[0001] The present invention relates to a banding ~~method and~~ apparatus and more particularly to a more efficient, ~~and~~ faster, ~~banding method and a~~ simple and reliable apparatus for banding product ~~performing the method~~.

In paragraph 0039, please change the paragraph to read as follows:

[0039] When the guide element is in its first position adjacent the strapping machine, the guide element directs or guides and retains the band dispensed by the strapping machine in the C-shaped passageway 134. However, after the strapping machine retrieves the lead end portion 94 of the band 88, the guide element moves toward its second position away from the strapping machine, and the strapping machine continues to pull on the band to tighten the band about the group of fence posts. See FIGS. 15 and 16. The combination of the retreating guide element and the pulling force on the band causes it to part or open the jaw members so that the band escapes from the guide element. When the group of five fence posts 81 are tightly banded

and the guide element is out of the way, the vertical conveyors are able to move the cradles downwardly without obstruction. See FIG. 18. Before this movement, however, the banding process must be completed. To complete banding, the band must be attached to itself while tightly banding the fence posts. The band is then severed.

In paragraph 0042, please amend the paragraph to read as follows:

[0042] After the band is tightened around the group of posts 81, FIG. 18, the vertical conveyor systems 34, 36, move the banded posts downwardly and eventually the cradles pivot around the lower sprocket 44. As the cradles move around the lower sprockets, they reorient themselves in an upsidedown position, such as the cradle 48, FIG. 16, is positioned. As the cradles travel around the lower sprocket, the force of gravity pulls the banded fence posts 149 out of the cradles and onto a lower outgoing conveyor system 150, FIG. 18. The outgoing conveyor directs the banded fence posts to a stacking station 22, FIG. 2. Thereafter, the banded and stacked posts are directed to the shipping station or department 24 and thereafter the fence posts are shipped to customers.

Please amend paragraph 0043 to read as follows:

[0043] To further increase the speed of the banding operation and to offer some redundancy in case there is a malfunction of the two vertical conveyor systems 34, 35, FIGS. 3 and 4, the essentially duplicate pair of vertical conveyor systems 38, 40 with similar cradles 160, strapping machines 162, 164 and guide elements 166, 168 are provided. These devices all operate in the same manner as already described for their identically names counterparts. The operators 78, 80 have the option of placing a group of five fence posts in either a pair of cradles of the vertical conveyor ~~conveyer~~ systems 34, 36 ~~35~~ or a pair of cradles of the vertical conveyor

systems 38, 40. Another option is to increase the speed of the banding operation by using both pairs of vertical conveyor systems alternately.

Please amend paragraph 0046 to read as follows:

[0046] Referring to FIGS. 3[.] 4[.] and 12-19, the process for banding fence posts is illustrated graphically and in flow chart formats. The equipment for the banding station 26 is collected and arranged 180, FIG. 19 in relation to the platform 30. Two pairs of vertical conveyor systems are located in near mirror image to one another. They may be offset for spacing reasons as shown in FIG. 4. Two pairs of strapping machines and two pairs of guide elements are also set up in near mirror image of one another (although perhaps off-set). The fence posts arrive at the end of the incoming conveyor 28. Two operators gather a group of five posts 81, lift the posts and deposit them on a pair of cradles of one pair of the vertical conveyor systems. Some cradles of both conveyor systems are shown loaded with fence posts. The guide elements are shown in FIG. 3 in their second position, spaced from the strapping machines. The cradles are then lowered 182, FIG. 19 to a position adjacent the strapping machines and located between the dispensing and the return chutes. Next, the guide elements are moved 184 to their first positions, shown in FIG. 14. Thereafter, a band is dispensed and inserted 186 into the guide element as also shown in FIG. 14. The band continues around the guide element passageway and is retrieved by the strapping machine. The strapping machine pulls on the band and the guide element retracts 188 to their second position as shown in FIG. 15.